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| Agency Name | Philadelphia Department of Revenue |
| Name your program, idea, or project: | Government video: the Broccoli of YouTube |
| What is the problem that you wanted to solve? | Access to information about taxes and water bills is critical in servicing Philadelphia residents and communities. Philadelphia residents need to know their obligations. When they need help, they need to know about available assistance programs. The problem is that the Department of Revenue has struggled to reach residents with this information. When we do reach residents, they often find our messages difficult to understand. |
| Who was involved in addressing the problem? | The Department of Revenue’s communications Team, as well as subject matter experts enlisted to help. |
| How did they go about finding a solution? | The Department of Revenue developed the human and technical capacity to produce videos in-house. We created a YouTube channel to expand the ways in which we communicate with residents. We identified important topics for videos, and the appropriate experts for each topic. We decided to cover different topics with different video formats.  We understood that our videos would never be viral sensations, but another tool to deliver vital information to taxpayers. |
| Describe the outcome. What is the new idea, approach, program, or activity? | The Department of Revenue launched its own YouTube channel. It now contains dozens of easy-to-understand videos about how to file taxes, property tax and water bill assistance, online payment options, translation services and more.  We also created a Facebook LIVE series, the Revenue Rundown, now in its second season. These weekly videos broadcast during the tax season deliver timely updates to taxpayers and water customers, and inform viewers about neighborhood events throughout Philadelphia where they can meet with a Revenue representative in person. “Evergreen” videos, those with content that remains consistently relevant, are projected on a large screen in our main customer service site in Philadelphia, and several of our videos are regular features of the City’s PHL gov TV (Channel 64), reaching even more residents. Every video is designed to be accurate, but understood easily; includes appropriate calls to action and resources to get more information. The content that we provide, while never funny or viral, helps folks fulfill their legal obligation to pay taxes. And we can see that the boring content that we provide is what people want. |
| What has changed since this was implemented? How have your operations improved? Include any data, analytics or metrics that would show the value of your program. Don't forget management advantages such as improved morale. | Our YouTube channel has opened a line of communication that didn’t exist before, and which is easily accessible on the Internet and mobile devices. In less than two years, 177 people have subscribed to our channel, with more joining every month. Our most popular video, step-by-step instructions on how to file and pay the School Income Tax, has been viewed more than 2,400 times; many of these views occurring between April 1 – 15. Both the size of our audience on Facebook, and their level of engagement, has increased significantly. Our most popular episode received more than 900 views, and most episodes received more than 200 each. During the 15 weeks we broadcast the show (January 4 – April 12, 2019), our Facebook Live received 188 new page likes, a 27% increase. The average monthly engagement during that time period was 9.2%. During the same months in 2018, before we started the program, average engagement was 3.9%.  Although it is difficult to prove a correlation, we believe that our video content improves compliance and reduces errors. We also believe our videos humanize the Department and create a genuine connection to taxpayers. An unintended benefit of our project is better internal knowledge sharing. The videos are also watched by Revenue’s own staff. They have become an effective way to disseminate policy updates within the organization and keep staff “on message” about the services we provide. Finally, we’ve become a model for other City departments in terms of innovative communications. The Mayor’s Office of Education has borrowed equipment and knowhow to produce similar content, and the Office of the Chief Administrative Officer has sought advice on using video to better inform City vendors. |
| Is this an in-house project, or did you partner with an outside vendor or service-provider? | 100% in-house |
| What comes next — will you be adding to your program, rolling it out more widely, trying additional approaches? | We are currently in the second season of our Facebook LIVE show. We plan to increase the number of “How To” videos we have on our YouTube channel. We have requested live video capabilities from LinkedIn in order to expand the program with a focus on business taxes and tax professionals as an audience. |
| Website/Documentation URL (Must be publicly accessible) | <https://www.youtube.com/philarevenue> |